

THE MORALIST.

Cui potior patria fuit interdicta voluptas.

Why for the stews, or pleasures deadly flame,
Forsake our Country—and disgrace our name?

No. 8.

SATURDAY, JULY 30, 1814.

My excellent warm-hearted friend, the Duke, never comes to this City without taking, what he calls, the *grand rounds* of fashionable pleasures. He engages in this review as a sort of *memento mori*, or rather, as an old hound, who still delights to witness the hunt, and hear the sound of the bugle, although age has long since worn out his teeth and crippled his fleetness. He is often told that it does not become an infirm old gentleman like himself to limp about at the Billiard-Rooms, the Ball-Rooms, the Theatres and the Bagnios of the town, thereby giving the authority and support of his high example and presence, to the young beardless manikins, who flock together in all those places like so many flies about rotten carcasses. However, as the destinies will have it so, the Duke has once or twice boxed the ears of some of those little, forward and profligate Runts, and sent them howling

away from these naughty resorts, home to their mamas. And now the Devil really has persuaded the Duke that he visits those fashionable Temples of Vice, only to see human nature in its ever varying and proteus shapes—from motives of benevolence—to do good—and to whip little boys into the path of virtue. And I defy the best talker, the best logician, and the best theologian of America, to upset that notion of the Duke, for he is as fixed, stubborn, mulish, and immoveable in this opinion, as ever Virginian was in his party politics.

He came to me the other evening, in a great hurry, and throwing his hat and cane on the sofa, he seized my hand, and giving it a most hearty squeeze, while his eyes sparkled with benevolence and delight, he exclaimed “give me joy, my darling—I have done it—I have caught him at last, and sent him where he ought to go—crying and repentant.”

“Would to God,” continued he, “that some kind, chivalric and deed-doing knight, like myself, had, in my youthsomeness, gay and giddy days, seized me, when thoughtless I roamed through the haunts of dissipation, and drubbed me out of the delusive byeways of pleasure into the path of reason and felicity. Ah! my dear friend, how many a twitch of the merciless gout, and how many a pang of bitter

remorse would it have warded off from the afternoon of my life—for then would that Sun, which is now surrounded with clouds, have set in gay and tranquil splendour.”

The truth is, that although time has sprinkled his head with the snow of age, and wrought a number of little ugly looking wrinkles on his once smooth and polished forehead, Carroll's heart beats to the tune of pleasure even at this remote day of his life ; and his spirits are never more rapid, or his tongue more voluble, than when he has just finished his *grand rounds*. To do him strict justice, however, it appears from his own story, and indeed from my knowledge of his nature and taste, I am fully convinced that he has never been gross and vulgar, but always rather refined and delicate in the pursuit of fashionable pleasures, dipping in them only occasionally, when seduced by the power of example, instigated by tempting opportunity, or hurried on by the giddiness of super-abundant health and overflowing spirits. In the early part of life he lived in Richmond, in Virginia, and being born with high expectations, he was indulged by his Father with a purse always full and a rein never tightened. The consequence was, that, except when actually employed in the dull study of his task, rendered still more dull by his half foolish, and half profligate tutors, he followed the will-

wisp of his fancies, which sometimes indeed led him a meteor and fiery dance, though he always assured me he detested the vices and follies peculiar to his native state. Virginia pleasures, he says, are as celebrated for the coarseness and vulgarity of their nature, as they are for the corrupting influence, which they universally have on the minds and morals of their deluded votaries. A Virginian Gentleman will drink a mint sling before breakfast, attend a coarse, vulgar, boisterous, drunken, ill-conducted horse race before dinner, gamble all the afternoon and evening, and retire half intoxicated with wine and whiskey, to the refined society of some mulatto *Venus Urania*, who, as likely as not, is as much his Father's Goddess as his own—and very probably related to both of them. Yet he is hospitable, generous, feeling, eloquent, brave, and patriotic; and I am puzzled whether most to detest his vices, or admire his virtues—but I am compelled to acknowledge, that the North is not greatly distinguished either for the one or the other. The Virginians are attached to one another heart and soul—we, of the North, care only for self. The Virginians praise one another in conversation, in letters, in papers, pamphlets, and books—the North, in books, pamphlets, papers, letters, and conversation, delight to slander and abuse each other. The South, like a Clan, are united, therefore have they weight in the Na-

tional Councils—the North are divided, and—have none. The South are less troubled by foreigners than the North, and this supposition may perhaps help us to account for our northern divisions. But to return to the Duke.

I soon understood from him, that he had just been acting the father and tutor to young Sing-Song. Sing-Song is a dashing blade of about twenty, and intended for the elevated and arduous profession of the bar. His person is graceful enough; his countenance not unpleasant; his wit tolerable; his heart amiable; his connexions of the highest order, and his expectations good. He is at every body's dinner party, because he sings a most excellent song; and the ladies must have him at their tea parties, and pleasure parties, because he is a singer; a trifler; a wild, talking, thoughtless, harmless youth, that loves pleasure more than he does his books; and is so very gallant, that he will at any hour, leave Coke upon Littleton to attend Ladies to the the play; and he had rather ride with them in a Coach, than write dull, long, frightful declarations. Consequently, he is a great favorite of the Ladies; and they do him the honor to let him wait on them; to pay for their Ice Creams, their Soda Water, their Hack-hire, their Play-Tickets, and so forth. In short he is so much their humble slave, that there is no living without him.

When not engaged with the ladies, or at dinner parties, you may always find Sing-Song at the Billiard Room ; at the Whist Club ; at the Cock-fight ; at the temple of Circe, or else eating Ice Creams at Contoit's, or drinking *perfect love*, and sipping Calf's foot Jelly at Madame Jolly's. And this is the way SING-SONG studies the law !

He can play Billiards, as well as the greatest Gambler that walks ; and as to Whist, Chess, and Brag, he understands them all well enough to loose his money ; and for this reason he is sometimes plagued with duns for his small debts. Still he would sing—drink—play—and trifle.

It was this young dabster in the vices, whom Carroll says he has pursued for the last three months, and whom “ he has caught at last, and sent where he ought to go—crying and repentant.” “ I had chased him,” says Carroll, “ with the vigilance of affection—I saw him strain his throat in the “ song—loose his senses at the board of festivity— “ and waste the vigor of his body in the brothels “ of lewdness. In vain I sought opportunities to “ break the delusions of his fancy, and to convince “ him that what appeared to his senses to be joys “ and pleasures, were ugly—corrupt—and loath- “ some Sirens ; captivating only the weak, the un- “ wary, and the inexperienced. But an accident

" has at length placed him in my power, which I
" forbear for his own sake to name, but his heart
" was softened, for it is naturally good—his eyes
" have been opened—he has returned weeping and
" penitent, to his neglected guardian ; and take my
" word for it, we shall no more sigh over the ex-
" cellence of his song, or hear the lamentations of
" friends, for his fashionable follies."

During the recess of the Theatre, the Duke is often troubled with what he calls *the blues* ; and he is sometimes puzzled how to pass away those evenings which Tragedy and Comedy help him to beguile. He says there is more lewd excesses and little vulgar vices among the common people in summer than in winter ; for the very reason, that the Theatres in this latter season employ those hours which otherwise many would devote to more noxious pleasures. In corroboration of this postulatium, he asserts that there is generally more vices in those populous towns of the Union where there is no Drama, than in those towns where the Drama is encouraged. And he cites instances, not only in Virginia, the Carolinas and Georgia, but likewise in Connecticut, that orthodox little State, where the people are so civilized that they have excommunicated and exiled the Theatre, by virtue of a Statute. He declares, that in proportion to the number of inhabitants, there is more vulgar

gaming, drinking, and lewdness in the demure, long-faced, steady-habit City of New-Haven, where he passed some years at College, than there is in the City of New-York—and that is saying much.

The fashionable amusements of our country, with or without the Theatre, speak no very high encomium upon our character as a nation. They have but a feeble tendency to the promotion of health, or exaltation of intellect, but they generally add to the corruption of the opulent, and seldom diminish the depression of bodily labor—they make the bad worse, and the sad no happier. Aristippus, the Philosopher of Cyrene, and the disciple of Socrates, used to say, that he was not attached to any pleasures but those which promoted the true happiness of man. If his spirit could visit the continent of America, and condescend to run the gauntlet of those pleasures which are considered among us most polite, genteel, and fashionable, he would probably return to the Court of Rhadamanthus, and prefer a complaint against every one of them, as at least silly, if not pernicious; as adding but little to the happiness, and very much to the miseries of human life. How greatly would he be astonished to see our young men, before they have half finished their education, running away from their tutors, like so many sheep from the shepherd,

to waste their time in games which neither invigorate their bodies, nor improve their minds—neglecting Grecian and Roman classics, to play billiards—throwing aside geography, to learn chess—disdaining the exalted studies of moral, and natural philosophy, to dissipate their youth—and exhaust their health at the noble amusements of Whist and Brag. But if to see the young and thoughtless engaged in these pursuits would excite his surprise, what language can express the idea he would entertain of our nation, when he should know that the old set the young the example in those useless and debauching pleasures—that Judges, Gentlemen, Generals and Senators, Statesmen and Women, mingled with unsuspecting youth in the midnight worship of the pale, haggard, and contemptible Goddess of Gambling.

Indeed we have only to compare the fashionable amusements of the age in which we live, with those of Rome and Greece, and perhaps it will help us to account for the great difference between the ancients and the moderns. We may judge of national character by national games, as a child will exhibit his nature in his sports. The bull-fights of Spain give testimony that the Spaniards are cruel—while the boxing matches of England are an evidence of the fearless but rough character of John Bull. The whole world must acknowledge that

he is a quarrelsome and bloody bruiser, as anxious to gain a laurel by beating Black Sam, as he is by a triumph over an army or a navy.

Among the ancients the most fashionable amusement had an immediate tendency to improve the individual—to fit him for the service of his country, to give strength to his form, and to ennoble his mind. The institution of the Olympia makes a celebrated epoch in the history of Greece, and they were guides in the computation of time, until long after the christian era. Whoever among the Romans or Grecians aspired to the honor of a reward in the Olympics, could not even enter the lists unless he had regularly exercised himself for ten months before the celebration, at the public Gymnasium. Great and glorious were the preparations for the festival. The combatants being engaged, they tossed the spear—they pitched the quoit—and contended with chariots—they ran—leaped and wrestled—and they disputed for the crown of excellence in poetry—in eloquence—and the fine arts. Nations assembled to witness the spectacle—and while the victors were rewarded with a chaplet of Olive from the hand of beauty, orators and poets blazoned their fame and sounded their praises. Whoever reads Pindar, will admire the Olympia, and while he blushes at the difference between the Olympia and our fashionable games of cards, bil-

liards, and dice, he will know why it was, that Greece and Rome had their heroes and patriots; nor will he be empuzzled to assign at least one cause, why so many of the youth of America are neither patriots nor heroes.

It would be fruitless to dissemble, that the thirst for gold, the love of luxury, the lewdness of principle, and profligacy of manners, which prevails in America, must and will have the same effects here, as in every other part of the world. We have no pious zeal for our glorious constitution—no sacred reverence for the customs or principles of our Sires—no attachment but to wealth—no zeal but to gratify and aggrandize self—we feast, drink, and game, without sympathy for the distresses of our country—we look with indifference on the foment of rebellion, and feel no respect for our Defenders in battle. Impoverished and taxed for the war, we sell bread to the enemy to replenish our purses—luxurious and licentious, we sleep while our land is invaded—cursed with a sort of impatience of government, and burning with a feverish desire for power, we despise our rulers, and bespatter them with disgraceful and indiscriminate abuse—and we are so weakened by corruption, and divided by factions, that the strength of the nation is gone—we are wretched at home, and ridiculed abroad. Alas! my Country! avarice, like a baleful epidemic, rages

among your sons, and from the lowest to the highest orders in society, debases their virtues—they have become indifferent to Honour, and have tarnished your Glory. For myself, I am fast sinking into the vale of years, old and infirm—I cannot go to battle—but, while I blush for our degradation, I will frankly speak truth, with a feeble hope, to awaken Patriotism—for, “ *Cari sunt parentes, cari liberi, propinqui, familiares ; sed omnes Omnium caritates patria una complexa est : pro qua quis bonus dubitet mortem oppetere ?*”